

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 EUR-12 /091 W
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R 131220Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7518

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USUN NEW YORK 0399

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0489

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GB, IS

SUBJ: GABON AND ISRAEL

1. IN COURSE MY CALL MARCH 13, PRESIDENT BONGO TOLD ME HE HAD JUST WARNED VISITING MOROCCAN INFORMATION MINISTER THAT GABON EXPECTED BETTER TREATMENT FROM ARABS OR WOULD CONSIDER RESUMING ITS SUSPENDED RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL.

2. PRESIDENT REMARKED THAT DELEGATE FROM ONE OF NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAD SPOKEN IN INSULTING TERMS OF BLACK AFRICANS DURING RECENT OAU MEETING. NOT ONLY HAVE ARABS DONE NOTHING FOR US FINANCIALLY, PRESIDENT SAID, BUT NOW THEY START INSULTING US. IF THIS TREATMENT CONTINUES, HE REPORTEDLY TOLD MOROCCANS, WE WILL CONSULT WITH "LIKEMINDED FRIENDS" AND PERHAPS RENEW RELATIONS WITH GOI.

3. PRESIDENT ADDED TO ME THAT HE FOUND BREAK WITH ISRAEL VERY PAINFUL, SINCE ISRAELIS HAD PROVIDED HIM ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT AND NEVER DEMANDED ANYTHING IN RETURN. GOI HAD, FOR EXAMPLE, GIVEN 500 UZI SUBMACHINE
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GUNS TO PRESIDENTIAL GUARD AND VARIOUS FORMS OF

TECHNICAL HELP, AND HAD ALWAYS TREATED HIM WITH GREAT KINDNESS AND RESPECT. THUS, RENEWING RELATIONS WOULD BE FOR HIM "ACT OF CONSCIENCE" AND NOT SIMPLY MEANS OF STRIKING BACK AT ARABS.

4. COMMENT: THIS IS NOT FIRST TIME PRESIDENT HAS EXPRESSED TO ME HIS INTEREST IN RESUMING RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. HOWEVER, HE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT MOVE ALONE ON THIS ISSUE, DESPITE FACT THAT HIS DESIRE TO RENEW TIES APPEARS GENUINE. WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ANY INDICATIONS FROM ADDRESSEES THAT OTHER AFRICAN STATES MIGHT BE PREPARED RENEW RELATIONS WITH GOI, AS GABON WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY JOIN ANY RESPECTABLE MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION. STEIGMAN

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